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ABSTRACT

This article examines first discusses the three components of clinical supervision: (1) the planning conference; (2) the six steps of observation; and (3) the meeting with the teacher to analyze and interpret data as well as to reach decisions about alternatives, changes, and resolutions for future efforts by the teacher. Four approaches involving clinical supervision of a teacher working with a student teacher are described. Finally, four approaches to the problem of teacher evaluation while supporting and encouraging the teacher are described. (SI)

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Oregon School Study Council/University of Oregon/Eugene, OR/Vol. 29, No. 3—Spring 1989

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OSSC REPORT

Oregon School Study Council/University of Oregon/Eugene, OR/Vol. 29, No. 3—Spring 1989

Evaluating, Supervising, and Analyzing Teaching

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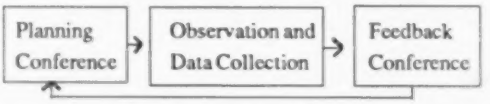
In everyday language, evaluation, supervision, and analysis of teaching sound pretty much the same. There are important differences, however, when we consider who will do it and why. An evaluator can either value or devalue something. A supervisor can either oversee, inspect, and look for what's wrong, or have "super vision" to perceive what will make things (even) better. Analysis of what teachers do is essential to supervision. In education we tend to call this sort of perception *clinical supervision.*

Clinical Supervision

In its simplest form, clinical supervision consists of three components that are repeated several times during a year. A trained observer (1) meets with the teacher and plans for the next observation; (2) observes a lesson systematically (and nonjudgmentally) and records information related to the objectives set during the planning conference; and (3) meets with the teacher to (a) analyze (together) the data recorded by the observer, (b) interpret the meaning of this information from the teacher's perspective, and (c) reach decisions about the next steps.

Hence, in its simplest form the clinical supervision cycle has three parts:



Oregon law concerned with teacher evaluation requires a goal-setting conference, "multiple" observations (which means "two" to many evaluators), and a postevaluation interview.

Some writers, believing it is sufficient for supervisors merely to observe and then confer with teachers, advocate elimination of the planning conference. Our view of what can be accomplished

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by expert observation of teaching implies a need for planning the observation with the teacher. The logic goes like this: The goal of observation is feedback—information that is useful, relevant, objective, accurate, understandable. The goal of feedback is analysis, interpretation, and decision-making by the teacher, with the assistance of the observer. If these goals are to be reached, the teacher and the observer need to plan together.

The Planning Conference

If the decision-making is ultimately the concern of the teacher—and we believe that it must be if teaching is going to change and improve or be reflective, and if the teacher is aware of and interested in more than one approach to teaching—then it follows that an observer needs to know:

- What kind of lesson will be observed
- What specific strategies, tactics, and behaviors the teacher will be attempting to use
- What sorts of behaviors the teacher expects from students
- What explicit concerns the teacher wants to address by means of observational data
- What sort of observational data will be most useful

If there is only one way to teach and only one kind of data to collect, then we can skip the planning conference. But why stop there? If interpretation (of what was observed) and decision-making (about what the teacher did do and should do) are the ultimate concern of the observer only, then we can skip the feedback conference also, and just file a report. At least one prominent writer has advocated doing away with observation as well. Eliminating the planning conference, feedback conference, and observation would pretty well do away with the three major elements of clinical supervision.

Is it possible to analyze teaching without observing it? We could use data other than observational—information "collected" from lesson plans, student test scores, examples of student work, hearsay from other teachers, impressions from conversations in the lunchroom or corridor, feelings about how the teacher looks or talks, opinions expressed by parents, and membership in community organizations.

Analyzing teaching requires something to start with, something to talk about, and someplace to head for. We suggest beginning with data that are factual, accurate, relevant, and understandable. Inferences and opinions developed by the observer (or collector) *may* be accurate or perceptive; on the

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other hand, they may be biased, distorted, and inappropriate.

Observation

Six kinds of data an observer can collect (or a collector can observe) are:

Selective Verbatim—words that were actually said (by teachers or students) that can be written down.

Verbal Flow—marking on a seating chart who spoke (also, in a more sophisticated form, how often and when).

At Task—a time-sampling method for noting periodically over time who appears to be attending to the task the teacher has set.

Class Traffic—tracking the teacher's (or students') physical movement around the classroom.

Interaction Analysis—who said what (kind of statement) to whom and when. This can be coded on a timeline with categories such as "expression of feelings," "praise," "encouragement," "questions," "lecture," "directions," "criticism," "antagonism."

Anecdotal Notes—what was happening altogether (in the view, or perception, of the observer) noted briefly. The notes can identify who, what, where, and when. Inferring or concluding "why" goes beyond analysis and becomes judgment or evaluation.

Something to Start With

Of the six methods for recording data on teaching that we have described, the least likely to be biased or distorted by the observer is "Selective Verbatim" that is transcribed from a tape recording (assuming the recording is of good quality). The one most prone to subjectivity is the "Anecdotal Record." After all, the observer chooses *which* incidents to note, *how* to record them (using adjectives such as "chaotic," "unruly," "disrespectful," for example), and what to ignore. "Class Traffic" and "Verbal Flow" simply require accuracy and concentration on who is moving or talking and where. "At Task" and "Interaction Analysis" require judgment calls in choosing the coding to record at a given moment, but they are usually accepted by teachers as reasonably accurate unless

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there is lack of trust for the observer.

Something to Talk About

Given the hard data, we have something to start with. "Here's what I saw happening" is a reasonable statement for an observer to make. Note that it does *not* state *why* it is happening, or what *should* be happening. Interpreting what is happening involves the teacher's analysis, conjecture, hypotheses, and predictions—leading to decisions for the future.

It is not unusual to find observers (typically with titles such as "supervisor," "principal," or "evaluator") who conduct the process backward. Instead of starting with data (facts), then analyzing and interpreting the data before reaching decisions, they prefer to start with a conclusion or preconception, interpret any evidence in the light of that prejudgment (prejudice), and pursue the self-fulfilling hypothesis by selecting only data that fit. For example: "Two students were not paying attention" rather than "Twenty-eight were at task." Bruner has called this "functional fixedness"—proceeding on the basis of a single hypothesis that happens to be wrong.

For many teachers, their self-concept or confidence level is fragile enough that having their teaching analyzed in the backward fashion just described can have devastating effects. An extreme

literary example is the film "Gaslight," in which a husband (played by Charles Boyer) deranges his wife (played by Ingrid Bergmann) by telling her she only *thinks* the lights are dimming when they actually are (through the efforts of the husband's confederate, played by a young Angela Landsbury). This analogy was used in a teacher dismissal arbitration to describe the overwhelmingly negative feedback provided by a principal and vice-principal in a "program of assistance" for a teacher. The teacher previously had eighteen years of positive reinforcement for his efforts.

Someplace to Head For

Let us assume we have some hard data from a systematic observation of a lesson by an observer who is unbiased, objective, nonevaluative, and interested in aiding the teacher's growth through collaborative analysis. How shall the analysis proceed?

The obvious first step is to share the data. Ideally, this should be done soon after the observation by giving a copy of the "raw" data to the teacher. NCR paper (carbonless copies) or photocopies are possibilities. If a videotape or an audiotape has been made, it can be given to the teacher for viewing or listening before the analysis conference with the observer.

The next step is to elicit and attend to the teacher's perceptions of what he or she learned from the data. "What do you see that you would repeat if you taught this lesson again?" is a good question to ask. Teachers invariably find something they like in a record such as a videotape or audiotape. The other types of records (seating chart coding, verbatim transcriptions, traffic patterns, interaction timelines or charts, anecdotal notes) can also provide positive reinforcement that some of the teacher's intentions are being realized.

"What do you see that you would like to change?" never fails to produce a response. Asking this question hundreds (verily thousands) of times has not identified a teacher who has taught (or thought he or she taught) a perfect lesson. Truman Capote, in an interview, claimed to have written a perfect story. Even if true, this feat would be different from completely achieving your objectives with thirty wriggling reactors. In teaching, the equivalent of a 300 game in bowling or 18 under par in golf is to reach "some of the people some of the time" as opposed to "all of the people some of the time" or "some of the people all of the time." This has to do with "fooling the people," not teaching them.

A third question that can help a teacher analyze from "inside" the teacher's head (as opposed to "outside" analysis) is "If you were a student in that class, what might you want the teacher to change?" Picking a specific student for whom to answer the question can be useful and revealing. Many teachers will comment on students' individual needs regarding the level and pace at which information is presented. Another thing that teachers identify is the amount of structure that different students desire or require. No matter how explicit, linear, sequential, or ordered the structure, some students want more. No matter how flexible, varied, random, and tolerant the limits, some students want more.

Some Ways to Help Get There

Thus far we have looked only at ways to help the *teacher* analyze the available data (with the exception of the "gaslight" approach, which was portrayed as *not* helpful). What are some ways the *observer* can help the teacher besides question-asking (heuristic) approaches?

One technique is to assemble the data in such a way that patterns or phenomena become more obvious. For example, the pattern of student engagement and disengagement becomes more apparent when "at task" and "not at task" behaviors are transferred from a seating chart record to a table that summarizes over time. As the result of this revelation, a teacher may decide that half as much time would have been enough for an assigned activity. This may not seem like a very significant outcome, but if this teacher has been spending twice as much time as is necessary when teaching lessons six hours a day, 180 days a year, for 25 years, it is very significant indeed. Likewise, the interaction patterns* emerge from a timeline but are less appar-

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* These patterns are represented by codes: QiUE (teacher asks question [Q], student gives idea [i], teacher uses [U] and encourages [E] student's idea) or LQrC (teacher lectures [L], asks a question [Q], student recalls or recites an answer [r], teacher criticizes the answer [C]).

ent on a seating chart.

Another technique that goes beyond displaying the data in a revealing way is to comment on facts in a nonevaluative manner. For example, in relation to "Verbal Flow" recorded on a seating chart, the observer might say, "I noticed that if we draw a diagonal from the northwest to the southeast corner, nearly all the interaction is on one side of it." This is quite different from saying, "You ignored half the class." In "Class Traffic" charts, most teachers would notice that one corner is not visited by the teacher or that one student spent five minutes looking nonproductive at the water faucet in that corner. If the teacher does not notice or comment on these facts, the observer can do so—without accusatory tone or judgmental language. The teacher may have a convincing rationale for what was done or not done.

The skeptical reader may question the wisdom of allowing the teacher to choose what to analyze or to interpret what the observer points out. Remember, however, this is an article about *analyzing* teaching, not *evaluating*, judging, rating, finding what is wrong, berating, devaluating it. We are so accustomed to assuming that the only reason for observing a teacher is to look for what is wrong that the notion of helpful feedback seems alien, even though school districts invariably list "improvement of instruction" as the primary reason for teacher evaluation and supervision; accountability-related reasons are listed second. Nonetheless, the threat of evaluation generally makes teachers so defensive about being observed by anyone other than their students that the potential for growth-producing analysis is often severely compromised.

Where Are We Headed?

We have been considering *what* to talk about, *how* to talk about it, some *ways to help* get somewhere. Where? The goal is making decisions. These decisions are about alternatives, changes, resolutions for future efforts by the teacher. Hence, the decisions (if they are reasonable and feasible) are best made by the teacher. Only the teacher can change the teacher's behavior. Moreover, we are more likely to act on decisions we have made ourselves than ones others have made for us.

Teachers can make a wide range of possible decisions as the result of systematic observation and nonjudgmental feedback. The following general categories of decisions occur fairly often.

Things to change:
strategies, tactics, arrangements, goals, objectives, occupations (that is, leaving teaching for greener pastures)

Things to strengthen:
skills, resolve, techniques, knowledge

Things to eliminate:
mannerisms, habits, affectations, redundancies, irrelevancies

Things to experiment with:
new approaches, different materials, varied groupings

Things to modify:
techniques, attitudes, objectives

Things to learn:
new subject matter, different methodology, understanding of the implications of research

Ways of Going At It

There are as many ways of going at the analysis of teaching as there are kinds of teachers, kinds of observers, and kinds of teaching. The four approaches described below involve a teacher working with a student teacher. You decide how helpful each approach will be for the student teacher.

The first one I will call the "I'm right; you're wrong" approach. This teacher/observer's "data" consist of inferences and conclusions rather than recorded behavior that can be *analyzed* by the observing teacher *and* the student teacher, *interpreted*, and then used to *decide upon* options for change. The shortcut has eliminated planning together, systematic and objective data collection, analysis of what the data show, and interpretation of causes and consequences; instead, it has jumped to conclusions.

The natural progression for this "concluder" is to deal with the student teacher in a concrete/sequential manner within an autocratic/command system using direct, didactic teaching strategies (and insisting on the student teacher using these same approaches). The transactions will be parent-to-child and the followership pattern expected will be for the student teacher to behave as an immature, inexperienced, grateful neophyte while the teacher

plays an omniscient, omnipotent role.

A second possible approach is one in which the transactions are adult-to-adult; the organizational context is collaborative and collegial; the strategy for learning is heuristic; the leadership style is participative and delegative; the learner is independent, mature, willing, and able. The goals are mutual, realistic, and important.

A third possibility is to *sell* the student teacher on particular ways of doing things. This may involve modeling the behaviors, providing guided practice in using them, leading cheers when they are used properly, using a theory or rationale (it may be abstract/sequential) that justifies the approach, and treating the neophyte as willing and potentially able to emulate the wizardry of the mentor.

If you would like an all-purpose sentence that captures the ideas (or biases) expressed so far, here is a skeleton:

	leader	tells
	teacher	sells
The	supervisor	participates with
	observer	delegates to
	(other)	

within an organizational structure that is
- autocratic
- feudal
- motivational
- supportive
- collegial
- autonomous

using a model or strategy of teaching that is
- didactic (telling)
- experiential (experiencing)
- maieutic (helping, "midwifing")
- heuristic (discovering)
- transcendent (seeing the "big picture")

and a personal style that is
- concrete/sequential
- abstract/sequential
- concrete/random
- abstract/random

housekeeping, control
clarity

to meet needs for
- variety
- surgence (enthusiasm for students and for the subject matter)

and evaluates on the basis of
- traits
- standards
- goals
- concerns

A fourth option is to abdicate all responsibility, turn the class over to the student teacher, and head for the boiler room for a semester of smokes and jokes. This can be labeled the "sink or swim" method. Professor Harold Hill, in *The Music Man*, called it the "Think" method—just *think* how you'd like to be able to play this horn you've bought. The "think or thwim" method is a natural hybrid. Take your kids to the swimming pool and sleep in the sun while they figure out how to swim (under the watchful eye of someone else).

Some Applications

Over the past several years, my colleagues and I have been studying* four promising approaches to a persistent problem that affects the operation of schools in North America. That problem is the tension that develops between (1) the need to evaluate teachers in order for school boards and school administrators to be accountable to taxpayers; and (2) the need to provide support and encouragement to teachers so they can develop their skills, expand their repertoires of teaching strategies, and enhance their ability to reflect on what they do in the classroom and improve their effectiveness. In educational jargon, these opposing forces are called "summative" evaluation and "formative" evaluation, respectively.

The four programs we have been following are quite different from one another in some respects, yet similar in others. One was initiated, implemented, supported, and overseen by the principal of a large, urban elementary school in Manitoba. The second was initiated by community colleges in Saskatchewan in response to a demand from some of their clients (school teachers and administrators)

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* Support for this research has come from the Canadian Embassy through two small grants, with support from some colleagues at the University of Oregon (including the Oregon School Study Council and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management), and Canadian universities, school districts, and teacher organizations.

for field-based graduate training. The training was provided on request, on-site, through an external program from a "foreign" university.

The third program was initiated, provided, and extended through cooperation between a school district and a nearby university, with support from the ministry of education in Alberta. The fourth was initiated by the teachers' federation, supported by school districts, and implemented through the energies and contributions of teachers and administrators in British Columbia.

Several conclusions can be drawn from an observation of these four programs. First, teachers and principals can learn, practice, and use systematic classroom observation techniques to provide feedback for colleagues who are interested in improving instructional efforts. In western Canada, several formats for delivering the necessary training have been demonstrated:

- Voluntary participation by individual teachers in one school with visible support from the building principal
- Broad scale inservice in a school district supported by the government, the local university, and the district's central administration
- Training incorporated in a field-based master's degree program for teachers and administrators
- Training supported by a teachers' organization, local school districts, and groups of volunteer teachers (and their principals) from individual schools who contribute their time for the training and practice

Second, the training programs can persist over several years' time and tend to increase in size due to additional recruits (volunteers). Continued support from the sponsoring institutions and followup activities for participants appear to be necessary.

Third, the role of the principal is of critical importance. Ideally, the principal is actively involved as a full participant in the training sessions and also in the classroom observation and feedback activities back at the school, both as observer and observee. In addition, the principal's visible support of and enthusiasm for the program are crucial.

And finally, support from the central office (superintendent/director) is essential. This support must be visible (obvious) and tangible (recognized and given resources by the governing body).

Programs similar to those we have been studying are beginning to appear in Oregon. They offer promise for providing improved forms of evaluation, supervision, and analysis for teacher growth and instructional effectiveness.